1043
20 YEARS!
1987-2007
CFN
The Order

Come to Order: The Team Formerly Known As...

They're baaack... almost! One of the few remaining 1970's Marvel super-teams to be reincarnated in a 21st Century versions is returning to comics in July.

The only catch is, it won't be known by the same name.

The team formerly known as the Champions, who made their first modern appearance in ***Civil War #s 6 & 7***, are graduating to their own ongoing series in July, courtesy of *Matt Fraction* and artist *Barry Kitson* (fresh off his stint with *Mark Waid* on DC's ***Supergirl & the Legion of Super-Heroes***). Unfortunately, they can't appear in a comic by that name, since *Dennis Mallonee's* Heroic Publications has successfully trademarked the Champions name in conjunction with their own super-team.

But a change of name won't deter this super-team title from its July launch—they'll just be fighting the superheroic fight under a new title, ***The Order***.

The Order is the California element of Tony Stark's Fifty State Initiative—and in this case, the team has been assembled by Stark himself as a kind of social experiment—a chance to offer redemption to people that deserve it. Everyone on the team has had some sort of brush with frame and/or heroism in their pasts, but have all lost it somehow. The line-up, as seen in ***Civil War #6***, includes new characters named Hercules, Hephestos, Aphrodite, Hermes and Poseidon. But making the team doesn't mean the hard part is over – there's a catch.

"It's competitive continuance and it only lasts a year." said Fraction, who went on to explain that these heroes "are a team like the Yankees are a team—just because you play third base doesn't mean there aren't three other guys warming up to take over for you when your knee blows out. Team members get hurt, they get mad and quit, or they can be asked to leave, and they'll be replaced by new characters playing similar positions.

"There's a rigid code of conduct and performance everyone's expected to adhere to, and they're expected to adhere to it in extreme circumstances and under intense pressures. Failure to do so means Stark is done spending money and time on you. Don't get too attached to anyone. And, on top of all that, in twelve months, the power-giving process is reversed, the experiment is over, and our cast will be returned to 'normal human' status."

As that explanation confirms, the heroes who comprise The Order aren't mythological gods at all. The mythic names refer to positions on the team – if, for example, the person in the role of Hermes fails the rigid code of conduct or a performance benchmark, a new player is brought in as the new Hermes. "Just as in a professional sports set-up, there's also whole strata of characters that surround the first-team players," artist *Barry Kitson* said. "An infrastructure [is] involved... support systems, promotional considerations, powers trainers, black-ops instructors—a real dichotomy between the public persona and their 'give-no-quarter' superhero activities."

"There's an organizational concept to the notion of the pantheon of gods that the team is built around," Fraction said. "Each member plays their part in the pantheon, and Tony's deliberately wanting to tap into the pre-awareness that comes along with the old team and the *really* old team."

While Tony Stark will fill the role of Zeus, overseeing the team he founded, his new duties post-*Civil War* have made him aware that he needs an operative in place as a part of The Order to supervise directly. The man in the 'HERA' position is an old friend of Tony's, an actor that used to play Iron Man on a television series. "He and Stark were kind of like the Cary Grant and Randolph Scott of the Marvel U, you know? Party pals," Fraction said. "And now that the party's over for each of them, Tony's reached out to his old friend."

Kitson, making his return to Marvel after many years at DC, is excited to be involved in the launch of the ***Civil War*** spinoff series. "I feel it's a fantastic opportunity to create something unique for the Marvel Universe with someone I consider to be one of the most exciting talents in the business," Kitson said. "When I read the pitch and got to speak to *Warren Simons*, the editor, I was bowled over that they should want to offer me the job! A brand new series right at the heart of events in the Marvel Universe (spinning as it does straight out of the ***Civil War*** phenomenon)—what more could I ask for?

"It is arguably much more a 'cutting-edge' project than I've been associated with generally, so I'm really relishing the thought of the new challenges. As you probably know, I enjoy team books anyway – and this is such a fresh take on the whole concept I was hooked instantly!"

The Order is Kitson's first work under his new exclusive contract with Marvel. What led him to make the switch? "I guess the short answer would be that the timing was right," Kitson said. "Mark and I were already scheduled to be ending our run on ***Legion of Super-Heroes*** and Marvel was kind enough to offer me, what I think could be, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with some of the best talent in the industry and face some exciting new challenges.

"That doesn't really tell the whole story though. I've had an amazing time working at DC for which I'm very, very grateful, made some great friends and gotten to draw just about all the company's major characters.... which fulfilled a great part of my childhood dreams. But the truth is, I grew up reading mostly Marvel stories (reprinted in black & white in England) and began drawing inspired mainly by *Jack Kirby* (at around six years old), so the Marvel universe he and *Stan Lee* created has always held a great attraction for me and I hoped somewhere along the line I'd get to draw some adventures there too.

"In addition, I think right now the Marvel Universe is a particularly exciting place to be, there's such a fantastic roster of talent both creative and editorial working at Marvel – that I am especially honored to have been asked to become part of it—it really was an offer I couldn't refuse!"

Are there any other Marvel characters whose exploits Kitson would like to illustrate now that he's a part of the Marvel team? "This could be a very, very long list!" Kitson said. "Any and all of the Avengers (that takes care of about thirty I guess), The Fantastic Four, The X-Men, The Inhumans, Spiderman, Daredevil, The Hulk, Doctor Strange, Galactus, The Silver Surfer, Doctor Doom, Thor, The Ultimates...honestly I think we'd be harder set to find any Marvel characters I'm *not* keen to draw!"

The Order #1, a $2.99 comic, is slated for mid-July release; the book will be offered in a standard edition with a cover by series artist *Barry Kitson* and in a variant edition with cover art by *Steve McNiven*.

by Chris Arrant
(with Cliff Biggers)

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

Comic Shop Newsarama

Produced by Comic Shop News in cooperation with Matt Brady and newsarama.com

Oni's Metal Men

Readers might know *Rick Spears* best for his acclaimed human interest series ***Teenagers from Mars***. What they might not know, though, is that Spears is a metal music fan from way back—and he's combining his comics talents and his musical preferences in his upcoming project ***Black Metal,*** an original digest-sized graphic novel illustrated by *Chuck BB*.

"***Black Metal*** is truest, grimmest comic ever crafted by mortal souls. The eternal god of destruction will wreak his vengeance on us all!" editorial assistant *Douglas Sherwood* said. "In the great words of Immortal, 'Spirits rideth with the ones that know no fear, they are the sons of Northern Darkness!'"

Black Metal is the story of Sam and Shawn, misunderstood twins with a mysterious lineage and a penchant for the darkest metal. Though daily plagued by the rituals of the normal; school, shopping trips to the mall, and little brothers, the boys endeavor to stay true to the blackness in their souls. When they acquire the new Frost Axe album, their true destiny is revealed: they are the Roth incarnate.

Empowered by the legendary sword of Atoll, these kids are determined to thrash and wail on however many demons they have to in order to fulfill the ancient prophecy and regain their rightful position as Hell Baron of the Pit. The result is a dark fantasy that turns the volume up to eleven.

"I've been a metal nerd since day one, and to be working on this book is a dream," artist *Chuck BB* said. "Drawing something that doesn't mock the epic realm of black metal music, but instead totally embraces and showcases its true power."

Black Metal, a 160-page black and white graphic novel, is scheduled for August release.

Spawning a New Direction

If you're a veteran reader who still pictures the distinctive art of *Todd McFarlane* or *Greg Capullo* when someone mentions ***Spawn,*** then it's that you gave McFarlane's horror-hero series another look.

While writer *David Hine* has emphasized the horror aspect of the series since taking over as writer, it's the art of *Brian Haberlin* that brings that darker, real-world-turned-nightmarish angle to life. And it turns out that Haberlin (well known for his outstanding series of art instructional DVDs) is more than just ***Spawn's*** artist: he's also the editor of the series, and he's responsible for guiding the Hellspawn's comics adventures.

What led to the decision to give ***Spawn*** a new direction? " Actually this was probably the direction *Todd [McFarlane]* would have wanted from ***Spawn #150*** on," Haberlin told ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Vaneta Rogers*, "but we felt that we needed to wrap up a bunch of ***Spawn*** story lines for readers and couldn't just change gears without warning...

"Todd's idea was simple: He wanted to do a more adult ***Spawn***—and it seems to be working for old fans and new ones. They may have collected ***Spawn*** in the past and have now grown up themselves and are ready for a more sophisticated take -- at least that seems to be the feedback we are getting (fingers crossed) so far."

The biggest change in Spawn's world is the fact that "everyone died! Then Spawn recreated everything (he had the power of a god but gave it up to bring everyone back), and everything is not quite right with his new world."

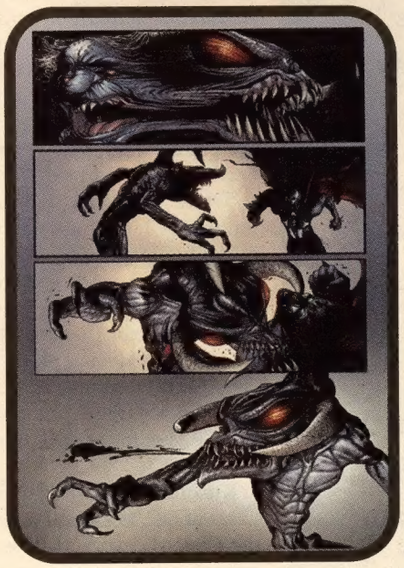
This dark, twisted world deserves a dark, twisted art style, and that's what Haberlin delivers. "I like to call it Neo-Noir (coming from the old film noir). Lots of blacks... sort of *Travis Charest* meets *Tim Bradstreet*. Lots of textures and as real as I can make it. Ideally, I want people afraid to read ***Spawn*** alone in a dark room."

This change in visual tone is reflected in the look of the title character. "If you look at the early ***Spawns***, he looks like a guy in a costume," Haberlin said. "But as the series evolved, the costume and Al/Spawn became more one. At this stage, if you took away the costume and ectoplasm, Al is pretty much bones (and that might just be his subconscious manifesting it). So to reflect that, he has a much more cadaverous appearance, but I plan on his costume to be changing more to fit his surroundings or situations -- more spikes, more armor, or less depending on the situation. Todd always says to treat Spawn as a shape that is always in or part of shadows. That's another thing I try to keep in mind."

Not only has Spawn take on a more ominous look, but so has his adversary the Clown. "I always felt you could just run away from the old fat Clown, so he never really scared me. By making him more lanky/wiry, he seems much more like a threat. He's really fast now! It also fits story wise, as The Clown is possessing a body that was starving to death."

Hine and Haberlin are reinventing a number of other established characters from the Spawn universe, including such old favorites as "the Violator, Nyx, Ab and Zab, Mammon—and coming soon, a new foe that will surprise the hell out of everyone."

It's not just the characters who contribute to the book's horrifying tone—it's the horrors that befall the human characters who are unfortunate enough to exist in Spawn's world. In one scene, a woman picked the skin off her fingers until all that was left was bones. Other horrifying images have included "a woman eating herself to near death... A man doing his own impromptu sex change. Heads decapitated, characters burned from the inside out, bugs, bugs and *lots* of bugs..."



Does Haberlin ever get creeped out by his own imagery? "Let me put it this way: I don't let my children see some pages I'm working on. And it's not so much that I get creeped out as much as I get darked out by it. I need to balance with a light and fluffy book on the side, I think."

Hine and Haberlin haven't forgotten the book's superheroic elements, however. He describes the approach that the duo take on ***Spawn*** as "a balancing game between horror and action. I think we have a blend of both, but sometimes they'll be more action or less. Really, the story is what determines that."

Haberlin is confident that fans who enjoyed ***Spawn*** in the McFarlane era would be quite pleased with the book's new direction. "I don't think there are many horror books still out there that deliver the way ***Spawn*** does currently. And I also think their are a lot of closet ***Spawn*** fans out there who liked the book once upon a time but either grew out of it or even the comic book habit in general (that seems to happen -- people coming in an out of it at certain times in their lives). I think that if they check in with ***Spawn*** again they'll find the book has grown up along with them."

Spawn is published on an approximately-monthly schedule by Image Comics.

ElfQuest Busts Out

Dark Horse, who has produced statues and busts based on popular culture icons, is about to bring one of comics' most popular fantasy concepts into the third dimension!

Later this year, Dark Horse will unveil the first in a series of sculptures based on *Wendy & Richard Pini's* ***ElfQuest,*** the long-running fantasy epic currently available in a variety of formats from DC Comics. The fantasy series, which stars such popular characters as Cutter, Leetah, and Skywise, has sold over three million copies in various editions, and is comics' best-known original fantasy series.

Dark Horse has enlisted sculptor *tim Bruckner* to produce three limited edition busts of ***ElfQuest's*** three stars.

Dark Horse's *Dave Scroggy* explained how the statues came to be. "We were at New York Comic-Con in February, and were quietly in the process of lining up some characters from modern comics for a new group of our 1940s-inspired 'syroco'-style statuettes. We asked Wendy and Richard if we could do one of ***ElfQuest***. Our timing was good, as figure rights, which had been tied up elsewhere, had just reverted to the Pinis. They agreed to let us do Cutter in this style, but in reviewing our display at the Comic-Con, Wendy admired *Tim Bruckner's* work on our group of ***Hellboy Animated*** busts, and thought that this format, along with Tim's specific stylistic approach to it, might be the best one for her audience.

"A deal was struck, and work commenced. It was decided to create three stand-alone pieces, but to have them enjoy a special relationship that suggested emotion and interaction when displayed as a set. As Cutter took shape through rough clay and more finished versions, excitement grew at both Dark Horse and at WaRP Graphics.

"The result was such a realization of her personal vision that upon final approval Wendy told us that 'you made this Elfmom cry.' To which *Tim Bruckner* replied 'Making creators cry is nothing new to me; it happens all the time. But this is the first time it has ever happened in a good way.'"

"We feel these busts are some of the best we have done so far, and are happy to say that the creators agree."

Each bust will stand 5.5" tall; the body will pivot on the base, allowing the owner to set up

Publisher
Comic Shop News, Inc.

Editors
Cliff Biggers
Ward Batty

©2007 Comic Shop News, Inc.
All Rights Reserved

Editorial Office
2770 Carillon Crossing
Marietta, GA 30066
fax (928) 441-5990
cliffbig@comicshopnews.com

Business Office
3577-A Chamblee-Tucker Rd. #215
Atlanta, GA 30341
(770) 939-1364
fax (678) 669-1525
wbatty@csnsider.com

http://www.csnsider.com

exact placement and position. Meticulously hand-painted, each limited-edition piece is individually numbered. Edition is set at only 1,500 per character, so allocation may occur. The first bust is scheduled for May release.

DR. STRANGE
VS. NIGHTMARE
MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS
TOLD IN THE COMICS MANNER
I NEVER KNOW WHAT TO DRINK WITH SOUP. SINCE SOUP IS SO MUCH LIKE A DRINK ANYWAY.
DR. STRANGE'S ALMANAC SOUP SPELLS A MESSAGE
WELL, THAT'S A RELIEF.
SIP
HURK!
TRICKED!
IS THIS MEAN DIFFERENT?

Marvel Makes Theirs Indy

Remember DC's offbeat ***Bizarro Comics*** collections that offered unusual DCU tales created by outstanding indy talents? Well, it appears that Marvel is about to do something very similar—only they'll offer distinctive indy creator tales in an anthology series rather than an original hardcover collection.

On the blog for the indy art collective *Meathaus Enterprises, cartoonist Dash Shaw recently posted two pages of for a previously unannounced* Marvel indy-creator anthology. "Here's the first couple pages from a story I just did for a Marvel indy-creator anthology series," Shaw wrote. "It should see print sometime later 2007 or early 2008. *Steve Ditko's* Dr. Strange drawings have a really fun, dorky weirdness that I tried to capture. Some *Richard Powers* snuck in there too. Circular panels, question-mark shaped word balloons and diagonal gutters are fun to draw."

While no title for the project has been announced, Marvel's Assistant Manager of Sales Communications *Jim McCann* confirmed the anthology and listed *Aubrey Sitterson* as the editor.

Coming Comics—Image in August

Coheed and Cambria continue their fantastic adventures in ***The Amory Wars #3,*** a fantasy/sf series based on the works of the musical band.

Master illustrator *Greg Capullo* is the focus of the appropriately-entitled ***Art of Greg Capullo,*** a 160-page trade paperback that not only offers an assortment of Capullo images (many of which have never seen print until now), but also a step-by-step look at the creation of the book's cover painting.

You just can't keep a good villain down! The Bomb Queen is back in the appropriately-entitled ***Bomb Queen IV***—and this time, she's declaring war on the Image Universe! Her third series led to nuclear devastation... but things are about to get even worse in this *Jimmie Robinson* tale.

Faith Warner is an up and coming cellist leading a seemingly perfect life until the night she loses her father to an assassin's bullet. So when Faith discovers she has the opportunity to use long dormant magical abilities to exact her revenge, she takes it. Her quest for vengeance is the focus of ***Bonds,*** a three-part series by *Durwin Talon.*

Robert Kirkman's edgy un-retired hero is coming back, *sans* Kirkman. This time around, ***Brit*** is written by *Bruce Brown* and illustrated by *Cliff Rathburn,* while *Kirkman* supplies editorial guidance. So what draws the retired senior-citizen superhero to come back into action? Find out in the first issue of this new ongoing series!

Matt Fraction's ***Casanova*** returns with a new artist—*Fabio Moon*— and a new storyline that makes ***Casanova #8*** a great jumping-on point for new readers. What terrible truth lurks inside of Dokkktor Klockhammer's horrible horror hospital? You might be surprised!...

Can four young witches wield the power of Earth's magic? You'll find out in ***Compass #1*** by *C.B. Cebulski, Akihide Yanagi, & Ryuske Hamamoto.* In the world where Magic rules, the last four clans of witches meet on the summer solstice for the Rite of Ascendency ceremony to ring in a new generation of spiritual leadership and appoint their newest "Heirs to the Elements". However, a deadly attack by forces unknown leaves four young witches alone and helpless, forcing them to learn to cooperate and use their knowledge, skills and magical abilities to prove they are indeed worthy of inheriting the abilities to control Earth's mystic forces.

Drug dealing, prostitution, and illegal fights are just ordinary things in La Rambla. But when one of the biggest crime lords is killed, the top criminals are going to start hell on earth to rule the city—and you can watch it all unfold in *Felipe Ferreira, Ivan Brandon, & Rafael Albuquerque's* ***Crimeland,*** an original graphic novel.

David Wohl & Bill Sienkiewicz present a prequel to Digital Extremes' upcoming action-thriller videogame in ***Dark Sector Zero.*** Enter the world of Hayden Tenno, a black ops agent sent on a dangerous assassination mission into Lasria, an Eastern European city that hides a deadly Cold War secret. Attacked by an unknown enemy, he awakens to find part of his body altered by an infection that has granted him inhuman abilities. Now, Hayden must learn to evolve along with his powers, to survive and to become a hero.

What if the Mafia had its own secret service...? Sara doesn't remember her real name. What she does know is that she traded away misery as a former prostitute and became a world-class killing machine. When a routine hit goes sour, Sara makes a shocking discovery: Suppressed memories, haunting her since childhood, are in fact *true*! And her *real* family, presumed dead, may actually still be alive. Learn the truth about her past in ***Killing Girl,*** a five-part limited series by *Glen Brunswick & Frank Espinosa.*

Meet Dahlia and her trusty panda sidekick in ***PX! Book One: A Girl and Her Panda,*** an original graphic novel by *Manny Trembley & Eric A. Anderson.*

There's an invasion a'coming in ***Elephantmen: War Toys,*** a three-issue miniseries by *Richard Starkings & Moritat.* Africa and China are at war. The battlefield: Europe. Enter MAPPO's genetically engineered soldiers, the Elephantmen—and the war takes a very different turn. (And for those of you who collect everything Elephantmen, don't miss the thousand-piece ***Elephantmen: Hip Flask Jigsaw Puzzle,*** featuring art by *Ladronn.)*

First Born kicks into high gear in August as the truce between the forces of light and darkness break down and Sara Pezzini & Patrick Gleason are caught in the middle of a war betwen the Darkness and the Angelus. *Ron Marz & Stjepan Sejic* continue the story that lays the groundwork for Top Cow for the next year.

As hazing is no longer legal on college campuses, fraternities and sororities have had to find a new way to test the mettle of their pledges—Ghosting. Ghosting is designed to scare pledges out of their wits with pranks designed to play on their greatest fears. However, what happens if the ghosts are real? Find out in *Fred Van Lente & Charles Carvalho's* ***Ghosting,*** a four-part limited series.

Andi Watson introduces a girl who's a magnet for the weird an unusual in ***Glister,*** a sixty-four-page all-ages book that also includes a new ***Skeleton Key*** backup tale.

Lisa is a young girl on the brink of suicide. Living alone in a town with no family and no friends, she has fallen into despair. Can her newfound friend Joshua convince her that life is worth living, or will she fall to the embrace of death? The answers can be found in *Fernanda Chiella's* powerful and introspective oneshot ***In Her Darkest Hour.***

If you've a teevee junkie, you know all about pilots—those sample episodes of proposed series that offer networks (and viewers) a chance to see test new concepts. Well, Image and Top Cow have their own ***Pilot Season*** coming up—only these pilots are first issues of seven comic book series, from which readers will get to choose two to continue as ongoing series in 2008. Pilot Season kicks off with ***Ripclaw Pilot Season #1*** by *Jason Aaron & Jorge Lucas,* starring the brutal fan-favorite.

In 1952, the U.S. Government's nuclear testing killed all of the good people of Sorrow, Nevada. Today, the sign in front of town reads 'population zero.' The locals, however, will tell you a very different story... and you'll learn the truth in the four-issue miniseries ***Sorrow*** by *Rick Remender, Seth Peck, & Francesco Francavilla.*

Kyle Baker offers a very special sort of military misadventure in ***Special Forces,*** a six-part limited series that follows a small-town autistic teen from his recruitment, through basic training, and then off to war in Iraq. This tale, which is inspired by a 2006 incident in which an eighteen-year-old autistic Oregon boy was recruited into the army, offers a darkly comedic look at war in the vein of ***M*A*S*H.***

Steve Niles kicks off a collaborative project with D2C Games—and the result is ***Steve Niles' Strange Cases,*** an anthology miniseries. The first issue, produced by Niles with *Dan Wickline & David Hartman,* brings the greatest monster hunters in the world to Holcomb Manor to hear an offer they may not live long enough to refuse.

Edgar Allan Poe just lost everything. His dead wife is haunting him in his dreams, his latest book has bombed, and the imagination that fueled his stories has become a curse. His prayer to never dream again is answered one evening as he falls asleep in an outhouse. His discarded creativity takes the form of his dream child, Edgar Allan Poo, who must now undergo a strange odyssey through the poet's troubled mind. Join this strange cerebral odyssey in ***The Surreal Adventures of Edgar Allan Poo,*** an original graphic by *Dwight L. MacPherson & David Hartman.*

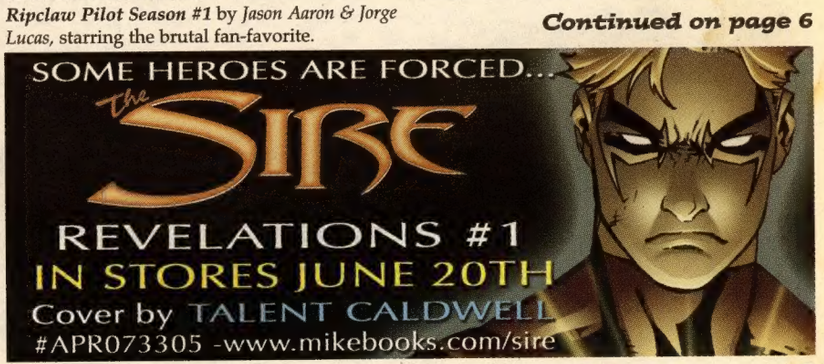
Ashley Wood, Gene Ha, Adam Hughes, Dave Johnson, Frazer Irving, Michael Avon Oeming, Ben Templesmith, John Ney Rieber... these are just a few of the talented creators who contribute original tales to ***24Seven Volume Two,*** an original graphic novel that offers another heaping helping of *tales about a robotic New York City.*

Witchblade #111, a ***First Born*** tie-in by *Ron Marz & Steve Sadowski,* finds Patience, the current Magdalena, drawn into the events surrounding Sara Pezzini and the new Witchblade bearer Dani Baptiste.

Image collected editions for August include:

- ***The Darkness Levels,*** a trade paperback collection of the six-issue limited series;
- ***Madman Volume One,*** a massive 300-page collection of *Mike Allred* zaniness;
- ***Noble Causes Volume Seven: Powerless,*** collecting ***Noble Causes #s 19-25;***
- ***Rising Stars Volume Five: Untouchable Visitations,*** collecting ***Rising Stars: Untouchable #s 1-6*** along with ***Rising Stars Prelude & #s 0, 1/2,*** and ***A Lost Tale of the Specials*** by *J. Michael Straczynski* and others;
- ***Spawn Volume Four,*** collecting ***Spawn #s 55-75;***
- ***Stray Toasters,*** a new edition of the long-unavailable Epic series by *Bill Sienkiewicz,* complete with new cover art, a cover gallery, and other surprises; and
- ***Tech Jacket Volume One: The Boy From Earth,*** collecting the short-lived *Robert Kirkman-EJ Su* series, now in color for the first time.

Continued on page 6



THE HULK™ IS GONNA BE IN A MARVEL MOVIE
ARE YOU?
ENTER
FOR A CHANCE TO
WIN
A WALK-ON ROLE!

BE IN A MARVEL MOVIE SWEEPSTAKES!

What's better than seeing a Marvel movie? Being in a Marvel movie! Enter the "Be in a Marvel Movie Sweepstakes" and you could win the walk-on role of a lifetime in an upcoming Marvel Studios movie!

Go to www.marvel.com to enter!

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Sweepstakes runs 09:00:00 a.m. ET on 04/16/07 - 11:59:00 p.m. ET on 08/17/07. To enter, you must be a legal U.S. resident of the 48 contiguous United States or the District of Columbia, who is 18 or older. Sweepstakes is void elsewhere and where prohibited by law. There is no guarantee that the winner will appear in the finished film once it is edited. Limit of one entry per person. For official rules, including complete prize descriptions, odds of winning and full details, visit www.marvel.com/be_in_a_marvel_movie.

MARVEL.COM

TM & © 2007 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved.

Ins & Outs

In: A trio of guest artists for ***Witchblade #s 110-112,*** the three tie-in issues to this summer's ***First Born*** event. ***Witchblade #110*** will feature art by *Matt Haley;* ***Witchblade #111*** will feature art by *Stephen Sadowski;* and ***Witchblade #112*** will feature art by *Rick Leonardi.* All three issues will feature inks by *Kevin Nowlan* and cover art by *Mike Mayhew.* "We wanted to make these issues something special, since they tie in to a storyline in ***First Born*** that is really going to reshape the Top Cow universe," writer *Ron Marz* said. "Getting pencilers like *Matt Haley, Steve Sadowski* and *Rick Leonardi* qualifies as pretty special in my book, but then to have *Kevin Nowlan* agree to ink all three—well, that was beyond any of our wildest dreams! These issues are going to be absolutely beautiful."

In: Believe it or not, a *fifth* edition of the ***Marvel Zombies*** hardcover is in the works, featuring yet another *Arthur Suydam* zombification of a classic Marvel cover! Look for it in late June or early July.

Out: ***Testament #20*** has been rescheduled; Vertigo will resolicit for the book in the July ***Previews*** for a September in-store date.

In: A new edition of the long-out-of-print ***Fantastic Four Omnibus Volume One,*** collecting the first thirty issues of the *Stan Lee-Jack Kirby* classic, along with the first two ***FF Annuals.*** If you've been considering springing for the $300-$500 pricetag that this book has been getting on the secondary market, be patient: you'll soon be able to add it to your collection for list price through your friendly neighborhood comic shop!

In: A new printing of the sold-out ***Absolute Watchmen*** by *Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons* is in the works; DC hopes to have the oversized slipcased hardcover back in stores in September.

In: According to DC's website, the long-awaited ***League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: The Black Dossier*** is once again in the publishing hopper, tentatively scheduled for October 24th release. The book was originally scheduled for fall 2006 release, but was pushed back to allow *Alan Moore* and *Kevin O'Neill* all the time necessary to produce the book exactly the way they envisioned it, complete with a "Tijuana Bible" insert and a 3-D section complete with custom glasses, as well as additional text pieces, maps, and a cutaway double-page spread of Captain Nemo's Nautilus submarine.

DC Books 'Em This Fall

DC has offered a sneak peek into their collected editions additions for October and November—and the list includes, among other thing, the oft-requested (by the folks in the *CSN* offices, at least!) ***Atomic Knights*** collection!

Here's the full list of newly-announced upcoming books:

DC

- ***52 Volume Four,*** a trade paperback collecting the lead stories from ***52 Weeks 40-52*** *(Nov)*
- ***52: The Companion,*** a trade paperback collecting a number of tales from the past forty years with a *52* connection, including ***Mysterious Suspense #1*** (the first Question issue by *Steve Ditko*), ***Gotham Central #40, Animal Man #16, Metal Men #45, Superman: The Man of Steel #97, Rip Hunter—Time Master #6, JSA #s 43-44,*** and stories from ***Detective #350, Strange Adventures #226,*** and ***Secret Origins #35*** *(Oct)*
- ***The Batman Archives Volume Seven,*** a hardcover compilation of the Batman stories from ***Detective Comics #s 136-154*** *(Nov)*
- ***Batman Chronicles Volume Four,*** a trade paperback collecting ***Batman #s 6-7*** and stories from ***Detective #s 51-56*** and ***World's Finest #s 2-3*** *(Oct)*
- ***Batman: Death in the City,*** collecting ***Detective #s 827-834*** *(Nov)*
- ***Batman: Rules of Engagement,*** a hardcover collecting the *Andy Diggle-Whilce Portacio-Richard Friend* tale from ***Batman Confidential #s 1-6*** *(Nov)*
- ***The Creeper: Welcome to Creepville,*** collecting the six-issue miniseries, along with the Creeper story from ***DC: Brave New World #1*** *(Oct)*
- ***The Flash: Wonderland,*** reprinting the *Geoff Johns* storyline from ***Flash #s 164-169*** *(Oct)*
- ***Green Arrow: Road to Jericho,*** collecting ***Green Arrow #s 66-75*** *(Nov)*
- ***Green Lantern Corps: Darker Shade of Green,*** collecting ***Green Lantern Corps #s 7-13*** *(Nov)*
- ***Hawkgirl: Hawkman Returns,*** collecting ***Hawkgirl #s 57-60*** and ***JSA Classified #s 21-22*** *(Nov)*
- ***The Helmet of Fate,*** collecting the five-part limited series that paves the way for the upcoming ***Dr Fate*** series *(Oct)*
- ***Jack Kirby's Fourth World Omnibus Volume Three,*** collecting Jack Kirby Fourth World tales from ***The New Gods, Mister Miracle, The Forever People,*** and ***Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen,*** featured in chronological order for the first time *(Nov)*
- ***JLA: Ultramarine Corps,*** collecting the *Grant Morrison* tales from ***JLA Classified #s 1-3*** and ***JLA/WildCats*** *(Nov)*
- ***Jonah Hex: Origins,*** collecting ***Jonah Hex #s 13-18*** *(Nov)*
- ***Justice League Elite Volume Two,*** collecting the last half of the *Joe Kelly-Doug Mahnke-Dustin Nguyen* maxiseries *(Oct)*
- ***Mad Archives Volume Two,*** an oversized hardcover collecting ***Mad #s 7-12*** *(Nov)*
- ***Mystery in Space Volume One,*** collecting the first five issues of the *Jim Starlin*-written series *(Oct)*
- ***Nightwing: Love and War,*** collecting ***Nightwing #s 125-132*** *(Oct)*
- ***The Question Volume One,*** collecting the first six issues of the critically-acclaimed *Dennis O'Neil-Denys Cowan* series *(Oct)*
- ***Robin: Teenage Wasteland,*** collecting ***Robin #s 154-162*** *(Nov)*
- ***Showcase Presents the Great Disaster Featuring the Atomic Knights,*** a hefty black-and-white compendium featuring a heaping helping of apocalyptic stories (including, at long last, *every Atomic Knights tale*!) from ***First Issue Special #1, Hercules Unbound #s 1-10; Superman #295; DC Comics Presents #57,*** and stories from ***Kamandi #s 43-46; Strange Adventures #s 117, 120, 123, 126, 129, 132, 135, 138, 141, 144, 147, 150, 153, 156 & 160; Weird War Tales #22, 23, 30, 32, 40, 42-44, 46-49, 51-53, 64, 68, 69 & 123; House of Mystery #318; House of Secrets #86, 95, & 97; Tales of the Unexpected #215 & 221;*** and ***The Amazing World of DC Comics #12*** *(Oct—at long last!)*
- ***Showcase Presents Metal Men,*** a black and white collection that includes ***Showcase #s 37-40, Metal Men #s 1-15,*** and ***Brave & Bold #55*** *(Oct)*
- ***Showcase Presents The Secret Society of Super-Villains Volume One,*** a hefty black-and-white collection of ***The Secret Society of Super-Villains #s 1-15, DC Special #27, DC Special Series #6, Super-Team Family #13 & 14, Justice League of America #s 166-168,*** and a story from ***Cancelled Comics Cavalcade #2*** *(Nov)*
- ***Showcase Presents Suicide Squad Volume One,*** a black and white volume collecting ***Suicide Squad #s 1-18, Doom Patrol/Suicide Squad Special,*** and a story from ***Justice League International #13*** *(Nov)*
- ***Supergirl: Identity,*** collecting ***Supergirl #s 10-19*** and a story from the ***DCU Infinite Holiday Special*** *(Nov)*
- ***Superman: The Bottle City of Kandor,*** a collection of classic Kandor tales from ***Action #s 242 & 245; Superman #s 158 & 338; Jimmy Olsen #s 53 & 69; World's Finest #143; Lois Lane #s 21, 76, & 78;*** and ***Superman Family #194*** *(Oct)*
- ***Teen Titans Go!: Titans Together,*** collecting ***Teen Titans Go! #s 26-32*** *(Nov)*
- ***Wonder Woman: Love & Murder,*** collecting the *Jodi Picoult* arc from ***Wonder Woman #s 6-10*** *(Nov)*

Vertigo

- ***American Virgin Volume Three: Wet,*** collecting ***American Virgin #s 10-14*** *(Nov)*
- ***Army@Love Volume One: The Hot Zone Club,*** collecting the first five issues of the *Rick Veitch-Gary Erskine* series *(Oct)*
- ***Exterminators Volume Three; Lies of Our Fathers,*** collecting ***Exterminators #s 11-16***
- ***Jack of Fables Volume Two: Jack of Hearts,*** collecting ***Jack of Fables #s 6-11*** *(Oct)*
- ***Testament Volume 3: Babel,*** collecting ***Testament #s 11-16*** *(Nov)*

WildStorm

- ***Ex Machina Volume Six: Power Down,*** collecting ***Ex Machina #s 26-29*** and ***Ex Machina: Inside the Machine*** *(Nov)*
- ***Red Menace,*** collecting the six issue miniseries by *Danny Bilson, Paul DeMeo, Adam Brody, Jerry Ordway, & Al Vey (Oct)*
- ***Wetworks Volume One,*** collecting the first six issues of the series by *Mike Carey, Whilce Portacio, & Richard Friend (Oct)*
- ***Midnighter: Killing Machine,*** collecting *Garth Ennis's* ***Midnighter #s 1-6*** *(Nov)*

CSNsights

Reviews by Cliff Biggers

Spider-Man Omnibus Volume One

(Marvel Comics, $99.99)

Everything that defines Spider-Man can be found in this one massive book collecting ***Amazing Fantasy #15's*** lead story introducing Peter Parker and his costumed alter-ego, ***Amazing Spider-Man #s 1-38, Annuals 1 & 2,*** and Ditko-inked stories from ***Strange Tales Annual #2*** (the first full-length Spidey-Human Torch team-up) and ***Fantastic Four Annual #1*** (an expanded version of the Spidey-FF meeting from ***Amazing Spider-Man #1***).

Stan Lee and *Steve Ditko* created a superhero so different from any other comics character that he redefined contemporary comics heroes. Before Spider-Man, the superhero's alter-ego was little more than a plot device—a cause for fleeting worries or a catalyst for inconvenient conflicts. It was the superhero who was the star of the book, however. Then came Lee & Ditko's Spider-Man, which made the *human* as important as the *super*, and comics changed direction.

Doctor Octopus, the Lizard, the Sandman, the Vulture, the Scorpion, the Green Goblin, the Spider-Slayers—every important member of Spidey's rogues' gallery (with the exception of Venom) can be found in these pages.

It's *Steve Ditko's* art that gives the book its impact; his figures, lithe and nimble and twisted where Kirby's were powerful and grandiose and dynamic, made Spider-Man different from any other book. This oversized edition shows off that art to near-perfection; some might quibble over an occasional page that isn't restored to the standards of the remainder of the book, but the quality of the reprint is high enough that most readers would never notice.

The inclusion of letters columns is significant. The development of the Marvel community is a crucial aspect of the early days of Marvel comics, and you can see that community develop in these letters and the clever, often self-effacing editorial responses.

Great material, superlative reproduction, oversized presentation, bonus inclusions available only here—no doubt about it, this is *the* version of these stories to have. And at less than $2.50 per issue, it's actually a better bargain than almost any other comic on the stands!

Grade: A+

Action Heroes Archives Volume Two

(DC, $49.99)

The past month has been quite memorable for fans of *Steve Ditko's* work. First the ***Amazing Spider-Man Omnibus,*** and now ***Action Heroes Archives,*** reprinting Ditko's later Captain Atom stories for Charlton, as well as his memorable reboot of Blue Beetle and his seminal Question tales that serve as a precursor for Ditko's post-superhero direction.

The Captain Atom stories featured in here are predominantly the tales that feature the revamped, repowered, recostumed Captain Atom; these stories lack the visual impact of the earlier Ditko tales collected in ***Action Hero Archives Volume One,*** but they have a bit more of the feel of Ditko's late-period Spider-Man stories. Unfortunately, *Rocco Mastroserio's* inks flatten Ditko's pencils a great deal, taking away from the artist's strengths.

The Blue Beetle stories show more of Ditko's flair; not only are the stories closer in feel to Ditko's Spider-Man work, but the distinctive two-toned blue costume rank right up there with Spidey's togs as one of the five best costume designs in comic book history.

The most fascinating book here is ***Mysterious Suspense #1,*** featuring the first full-length Question tale. The opening pages, featuring an argument about art and aesthetics, indicate the direction of Ditko's future works and the dichotomy that may have contributed to Ditko's eventual departure from mainstream comics. And again, in the simplicity of a faceless man clad in a trenchcoat and fedora, Ditko created a quintessential hero for the real world.

The bonus items include rarely-seen stories from Charlton fanzines, including several by Ditko and one striking Question tale by *Alex Toth.* These stories are reproduced in black and white, since they were never offered in

color; I wouldn't have minded seeing DC add color to these tales in keeping with the look of the remainder of the book, but I can understand why, in their desire to keep the Archives true to the source material, they chose to go the black and white route instead.

Dick Giordano's introduction, in which he offers an insider's view of Charlton's operation and explains why he preferred "action heroes" to superheroes, is a must-read. Charlton deserves an entire book, but this introduction at least offers some insight into the Little Comics Company That Tried Hard But Couldn't.

Grade - A (for the package)/B+ (for the material itself)

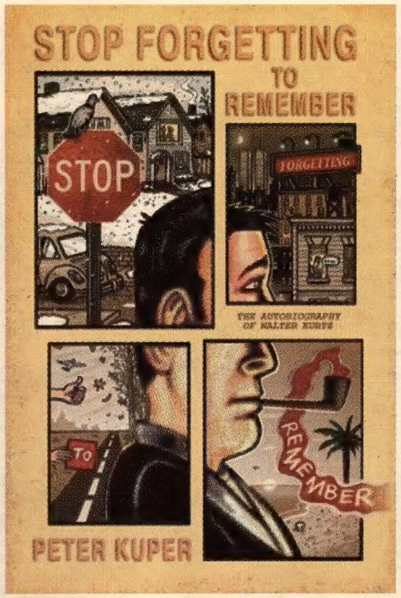
Stop Forgetting to Remember

(Crown Publishing, $19.95)

Welcome to *Peter Kuper's* autobiography, starring Walter Kurtz.

Kuper uses Kurtz as a tool by which he can present details from his own life, modifying them when he sees fit while poking fun at himself, other cartoonists, the self-aggrandizement of the medium by some, the commercial dictates of publishing, and the intrusion of real life into the illusion of life that every artist creates in his work.

Kuper is at his best when he portrays the complexities of real life in the frequent flashback sequences. He is less impressive in the rather stereotyped image-versus-reality views of the cartoonist's life (presented in a "breaking the fourth wall" style that is sometimes



clever, sometimes trite). And he is least impressive of all when he sacrifices narrative flow to political diatribes that seem unsatisfying and forced now and will seem increasingly out of place as time passes.

Nevertheless, ***Stop Forgetting to Remember*** is Kuper's signature work, a stark and open look at the life of a cartooning anyone living in our comic book how town.

Grade - B

Gutsville #1

(Image, $2.99)

Simon Spurrier & Frazer Irving take the Jonah-and-the-whale motif to the extreme, creating the story of a society comprised of the descendants of an ocean liner's passengers and crew, swallowed whole by a monstrous leviathan. They now live in Gutsville, a quasi-Victorian community that exists within the bowels of the beast.

The metaphorical elements of Spurrier's concept play a major role in the storyline, but ultimately Gutsville could work well even without the quirky "belly of the beast" plot contrivance. Its presence, though, adds to the sense of a separation from reality, the *Mervyn Peake*-esque fantasy tone of the series.

Irving's art is typically strong, although his palette sometimes conveys a sort of visual murk that doesn't play up his usually distinctive line work.

The first issue is provocative enough that I'll be back to see where Spurrier & Irving go in future issues.

Grade - B

Countdown #s 52-49

(DC, $2.99@)

A sense of disquiet, the haunting feeling that things aren't quite right, pervades this series masterminded by *Paul Dini*. Characters who shouldn't exist do; familiar faces possess seemingly unfamiliar abilities; there are signs that the DC Universe is more imbalanced as a result of ***52's*** finale than we might have realized.

Dini, along with a platoon of writers and artists, is creating a year-long weekly epic that does ***52*** one better: it takes place in the current DCU, it impacts contemporary continuity, and it features *all* the major players including the Big Three whose absent was a crucial aspect to ***52***.

The return of the multiverse will play a major role in the DCU in months to come; this book will serve as a nexus for the various alternate realities that comprise the post-***52*** DCU, and because of that it will have a strong appeal to continuity fans who like the concept of an interconnected superhero universe.

The book has started off with more mood and story establishment than plot twists, but that's not a surprise; a fifty-two-part weekly story can't exist from cliffhanger to cliffhanger. Instead, the writers need time to develop a true graphic novel of a story. It would have been nice to see Superman, Batman, and other members of the Justice League playing a larger role in the story from- the outset, but all that's coming.

Countdown builds on what ***52*** pioneered: the weekly comic book as a significant focal point of a publisher's output. Judging from DC's success at it, I suspect that weekly books will be a part of their plan for the foreseeable future—and I feel certain we can expect publishers testing the waters over the next several months.

Grade - A-

FROM MIKE MIGNOLA AND OSCAR® NOMINATED
DIRECTOR GUILLERMO DEL TORO
RON PERLMAN SELMA BLAIR
DOUG JONES JOHN HURT
HELLBOY
ANIMATED
BLOOD & IRON
OWN
IT NOW!
www.starzhoment.com
www.GoToHellboy.com
REVOLUTION STUDIOS
© 2007 Starz Media,LLC./Revolution Studios Distribution Company, LLC. All Rights Reserved. OSCAR is the registered trademark and service mark of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
STARZ
starz

POSSESSION
OBSESSION
BETRAYAL
MURDER

An original
black-and-white
hardcover graphic novel
written & illustrated by

DAVID LAPHAM

The multiple Eisner Award-winning
creator of STRAY BULLETS

Check out the
first 24 pages @
vertigocomics.com

JUNE 2007

Comic Shop Locator:
1-888 COMIC BOOK

Graphic Novels
for Mature Readers

VERTIGO
vertigocomics.com

Vertigo is a trademark of DC Comics. SILVERFISH © TM & © 2007 Lapham, Inc. All rights reserved.